

**US ARMY MEDICAL RESEARCH AND MATERIEL COMMAND (USAMRMC)  
CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED MEDICAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS (CDMRP)  
FISCAL YEAR 2017 (FY17) BREAST CANCER RESEARCH PROGRAM (BCRP)**

**DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW PROCEDURES**

The programmatic strategy implemented by the FY17 BCRP called for applications in response to the Innovator Award program announcement (PA) released in May 2017.

Pre-applications were received for the Innovator Award PA in June 2017 and screened in July 2017 to determine which investigators would be invited to submit a full application. Pre-applications were screened based on the evaluation criteria specified in the PA.

Applications were received for this PA in September 2017 and peer reviewed in October 2017. Stage 1 programmatic review was conducted in December 2017, and Stage 2 programmatic review (oral presentation) was conducted in January 2018.

In response to the Innovator Award PA, 26 pre-applications were received. PIs of four pre-applications were invited to submit full applications. Three compliant applications were received, peer reviewed, and underwent Stage 1 programmatic review. One of the PIs for these applications was invited to Stage 2 programmatic review (oral presentation), and the application was recommended for funding for a total of \$7.3 million (M).

Submission and award data for the FY17 BCRP Innovator Award are summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Submission/Award Data for the FY17 BCRP Programmatic Review**

<b>Mechanism</b>	<b>Pre-Applications Received</b>	<b>Pre-Applications Invited</b>	<b>Compliant Applications Received</b>	<b>Applications Recommended for Funding (%)</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>
Innovator	26	4	3	1 (33.3%)	\$7.3M

**THE TWO-TIER REVIEW SYSTEM**

The USAMRMC developed a review model based on recommendations of the 1993 Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences report, Strategies for Managing the Breast Cancer Research Program: A Report to the Army Medical Research and Development Command. The IOM report recommended a two-tier review process and concluded that the best course would be to establish a peer review system that reflects not only the traditional strengths of existing peer review systems, but also is tailored to accommodate program goals. The Command has adhered to this proven approach for evaluating competitive applications. An application must be favorably reviewed by both levels of the two-tier review system to be

funded.

## **THE FIRST TIER—Scientific Peer Review**

Innovator Award applications were peer reviewed in October 2017 by one panel based on the evaluation criteria specified in the PA.

The peer review panel included a Chair, scientific reviewers, a consumer reviewer, and a nonvoting Scientific Review Officer. The primary responsibility of the panelists was to review the technical merit of each application based upon the evaluation criteria specified in the PA.

### **Individual Peer Review Panels**

The Chair presided over the deliberations. Applications were discussed individually. The Chair called upon the assigned reviewers for an assessment of the merits of each application using the evaluation criteria published in the PA. Following a panel discussion, the Chair summarized the strengths and weaknesses of each application, and panel members then rated the applications confidentially.

### **Application Scoring**

In contrast to the typical technical merit review process, no criteria scores were assigned to the Innovator Award applications. Instead, reviewers were asked to address specific questions pertaining to the applicant's qualifications, accomplishments, research goals or ideas, and leadership skills. Each reviewer then voted confidentially on an overall level of enthusiasm (High, Medium, Low).

*Summary Statements:* The Scientific Review Officer on the panel was responsible for preparing a Summary Statement reporting the results of the peer review for each application. The Summary Statements included the evaluation criteria and overall scores, peer reviewers' written comments, and the essence of panel discussions. This document was used to report the peer review results to the Programmatic Panel. It is the policy of the USAMRMC to make Summary Statements available to each applicant when the review process has been completed.

## **THE SECOND TIER—Programmatic Review**

Stage 1 programmatic review, held in December 2017, and Stage 2 programmatic review, held in January 2018, were both conducted by the FY17 Programmatic Panel that was comprised of a diverse group of basic and clinical scientists and consumer advocates, each contributing special expertise or interest in breast cancer. Programmatic review is a comparison-based process that considers scientific evaluations across all disciplines and specialty areas. Programmatic Panel members do not automatically recommend funding applications that were highly rated in the technical merit review process; rather, they carefully scrutinize applications to allocate the limited funds available to support each of the award mechanisms as wisely as possible.

The criteria for programmatic review published in the Innovator Award PA were as follows:  
Stage 1 – Ratings and evaluations of the peer reviewers; relevance to the mission of the Defense

Health Program and the FY17 BCRP; relative innovation; and adherence to the intent of the award mechanism. Stage 2 – Understanding of barriers in breast cancer, articulation of a realistic vision with a high potential for impact in breast cancer, and leadership capabilities to form partnerships and collaborations that will impact breast cancer. After programmatic review, the Commanding General, USAMRMC, and the Director of the Defense Health Agency, Research, Development and Acquisition Directorate approved funding for the application recommended during programmatic review.